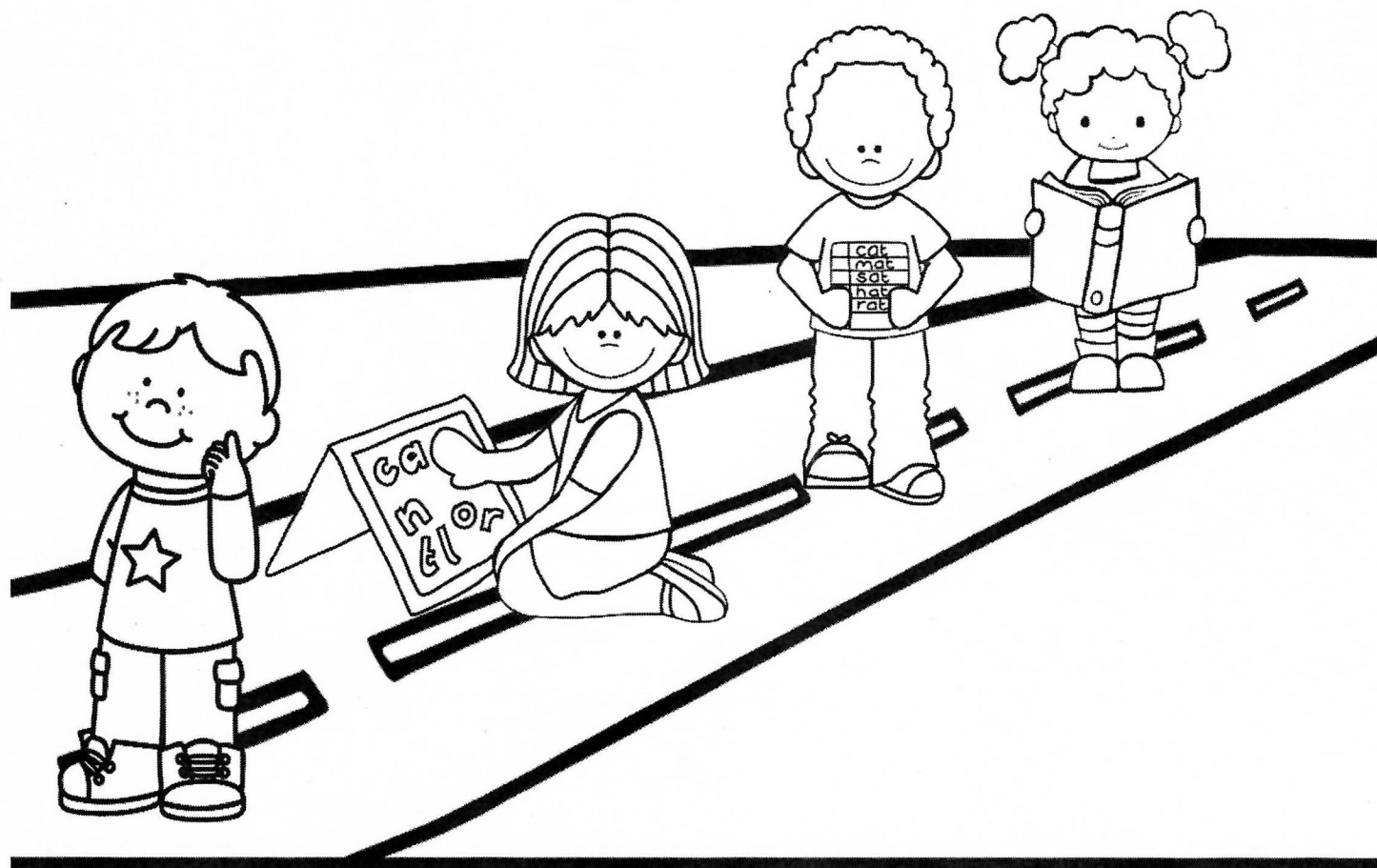


# On the Road to READING



A Parent's Guide

# Purpose

This guide is meant to be a resource for parents who want to understand more about the process of learning to read so they can support their child at home. It is NOT meant to be a set of expectations that parents must follow at home. Your child's teacher will provide an excellent education here at school. Your child will be involved in daily literacy activities that are developmentally appropriate and geared to meet his/her specific needs. However, anything that you can do at home will also greatly benefit your child.

# Who is this for?

This particular guide is for pre-readers and beginning readers. If your child has not begun their reading journey, this is for you. If your child knows letters but hasn't started reading, this is for you. If your child is at the beginning stages of reading, but not quite fluently reading, this is for you. If your child has strong skills in some areas but lacking in other other areas, this may be for you. This resource is not intended for parents whose children are already decoding with ease and/or reading fluently.

# What is Most Important?

Although the ideas presented here are very important to learning to read, the most important thing you can do as parents is read *with* your child **for enjoyment**. The end goal is for every reader is to have the skills necessary to read **for meaning**. If a child is reading for meaning, that means he/she is set up to read for **pleasure** and for **information**. Establishing reading as an enjoyable **routine** in your house is the best thing you can do for your future reader. Reading with your child can improve comprehension and increase vocabulary.

# Learning the Alphabet

Learning the alphabet is more than just memorizing the ABC song. First, children discover that words are made of letters that represent sounds. Then, they can go on to learn the letter name, shape, and sound(s). All children need varying levels of instruction and practice to learn and remember their letters and sounds. No matter what, simply knowing the letters and sounds is not enough. The end goal is to be able to recognize letters and supply their sounds with *automaticity*. This will help them in the future with more automatic decoding.

## Why it is Important?

A child's knowledge of letter names and shapes is a strong predictor of reading success. Our language is made up of speech sounds that, when put together, make words. These speech sounds have one or more symbols (letters) that represent that sound in writing. In order to decode, we need to remember the sound that goes with each letter or letters. This requires a) recognition of the letter shape, b) automatic recall of the sound associated with the letter, and c) the ability to blend the sounds together. To do the opposite, encode, we need to remember the letter(s) that represents each sound. This requires a child to a) remember the letter that goes with that sound, b) picture the letter in their mind, and c) form the letter correctly which requires memory *and* fine motor skills.

## Tips to Teaching the Alphabet

- Be systematic about introducing letters:

Being systematic about the way you introduce each letter will help your child master their ABC's. It is best to not introduce all letters at once. Find out the sequence that your child's teacher is using to introduce letters and reinforce those letters at home. Find out which letters your child already knows. Begin each day with reviewing those letters to gain automaticity. Then slowly introduce one to three letters at a time (depending on how quickly your child can learn the letters.) Do several activities with each letter and do not introduce new letters until your child knows the letters you have already introduced.

- Use a multi-sensory approach

Multisensory instruction is a way of teaching that engages two or more senses at a time. Using sight, hearing, touch, and movement can be helpful for kids learning the alphabet. This can be as simple as seeing the letter shape, hearing then saying the sound, tracing the letter shape on different surfaces, writing the letter, and making the letter shape in the air. Several ideas are on the following page.

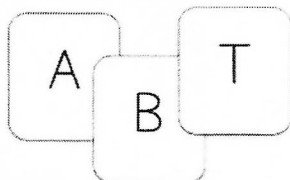
- Repeat, repeat, and repeat again!

- Recognize, retrieve, and write

When your child can recognize the letter shape, retrieve the name and sound, and write it without hesitation, then they truly *know* that letter. This is the goal. 😊

# Alphabet Activities

## Flashcards



Make flashcards using note cards. Start with the letters that your child knows. Add one new letter at a time. As you add more new letters, it is important to review the old letters so your child will be able to recognize the letter quickly and produce the sound easily.

## Get Crafty!



Write a letter on a piece of paper. Have your child use a Q-tip to trace over the letter with glue. Then use pom-poms, cotton balls or glitter to cover the glue. After it has dried, have your child trace over the letter with a finger, saying the sound of the letter.

## Play Dough



Write the letter on paper ahead of time. Build the letter using the play dough over the written letter. After your child has made the letter with play dough, have him/her make the sound as he/she traces over the letter with a finger.

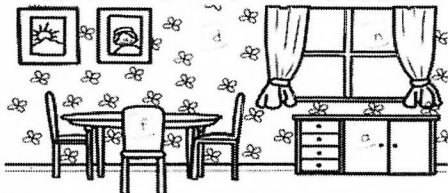
## Magnetic Letters



Call out a letter name or sound and have your child pull down that magnet. "Show me the letter A. A says /a/."

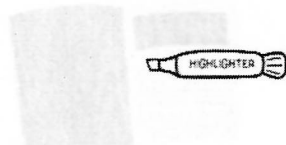
- If your child isn't able to identify the letter A, point it out. Trace the letter with a finger. Mix up the letters and try again.
- If your child knows the letter shape, then just focus on the sound. Say, "Show me the letter that says /b/. After they correctly identify, follow up with, "yes, B says /b/. What does B say?"

## Letter Hunt



Write a letter on a sticky note. Stick the letters all around the house. Have your child search for the letters. When they find one, say the letter and it's sound. If they get it right, they get to keep it. If not, you tell them the name and sound then "hide" it again. In the beginning, choose 3 letters, but write those same three letters on several sticky notes.

## Letter Search



Have your child use a highlighter to find letters in magazines. Focus on one letter. Have your child hunt for that letter and count how many they can find. You could also use scissors to cut out letters in a newspaper or magazine.

## WikkiStix & Pipe Cleaners



Help your child make letters using the pipe cleaners or WikkiStix. Cut some short and keep some long. After your child makes the letter, trace the letter and make the sound at least three times. Pipe cleaners and WikkiStix can be found at the dollar store, craft stores (Joanne's or Michaels) or Target.

## Tracing in Sand



Pour sand on a paper plate or tray. Say a letter or letter sound. Have your child trace the letter in the sand while saying the letter name and sound three times. Model correct formation for your child if necessary.



# What is Phonemic Awareness?

**Phonemes** are the individual sounds that make up words. For example, the word *key* has two phonemes and the word *stop* has four phonemes. **Phonemic awareness** is the understanding that words are made up of individual phonemes (sounds). When a child has phonemic awareness, he/she can hear and manipulate the individual sounds in words. Phonemic awareness is auditory and does *not* involve print. **Phonics** is the study of the sound-symbol relationships (letters and their corresponding sounds.) Phonemic awareness is a precursor to **phonics**, which *does* involve print.

## Why is it important?

Children need to be able to hear the sounds in words before they can begin to read or write them. When they are sounding out a word, they need to be able to blend those sounds together. They may know the letter-sound relationship and be able to sound out, “/c/ /a/ /t/”. They must have phonemic awareness in order to blend those sounds together to read *cat*. When spelling words, a child needs to be able to do the opposite- segment the sounds of a word. For some kids, these skills come more naturally. For many children, the ability to blend and segment words needs to be practiced and taught. Several studies (Anderson, Hiebert, Scott, & Wilkerson, 1985; Adams, 1990; Snow, Burns, & Griffin, 1998) show that phonemic awareness is a key indicator of reading success.

## Examples of Phonemic Awareness:

- Identifying words that rhyme.
- Grouping words by similar sounds: *Ball*, *bear*, and *bike* all start with b
- Isolating Sounds: Identifying the first, middle, and last sounds in words.
- Blending sounds into words: /w/ /i/ /sh/= wish
- Segmenting words: *wish* has 3 phonemes and is broken up this like: /w/ /i/ /sh/
- Manipulate sounds within words: Change the /w/ to /d/. What word? *dish*

# Phonemic Awareness Activities

## Hop to It

1. Draw three circles or squares using chalk.
2. Say a word and have your child jump to each circle as they break apart the word.
  - Ex: You say, "pot" and your child jumps into the first circle and says, /p/. Then he/she jumps into the 2<sup>nd</sup> circle and says, /o/, and then the final circle says, /t/.
3. You could also do the opposite: Jump together into the circles, saying sounds. Then try to guess the word.



## What's the Sound?

1. Say a word to your child.
2. Ask your child to tell you the first, middle, or last sound (not letter) in that word.
  - Ex: What is the last sound in *jam*?



You can do this activity while you are on a walk, in the car, cooking dinner or while looking at a book. Choose words that you see around you (leaf, spoon, cat, school, etc.)

## Silly Rhymes

*Simon Says with a twist!*

1. Replace a word with a rhyming word when giving a direction. Enunciate the rhyming word. "Simon says sit on the bouch." (instead of *couch*)
2. After several games, start saying Fimon fays or Timon tays.



## Stuffy Sounds

1. Get silly with your child's favorite 'stuffy' (stuffed animal).
2. Tell your child that you need help understanding his language. Ask him or her to help you 'translate'. Have the animal whisper a word a to you. Then tell your child the word, the way the animal said it.
  - "Mr. Bear said /c/ /a/ /t/. What is that word?"



## I Spy

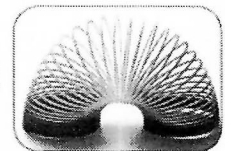
1. Choose words that only have two or three sounds (not necessarily 2 or 3 letters, just 2 or 3 sounds)
2. Say, "I spy a /c/ /a/ /t/." (You will take the word and break them apart to separate the sounds.)
3. Your child will try to figure out the word.



Household and outside words that you might spy: cat, dog, knife, fork, bowl, rug, bed, light, couch, chair, leaf, gate, pen, cup, mug, bird, toy, car, road, path, jar, tub, tooth, mouth, ring, soap, bug, book, tree, bee, box, pan, pot, vase, phone, sheet, shade, sock, shoe, coat, purse, hat

## Slinky Sounds

1. Say a word with only 2-4 sounds.
2. Use a slinky to "stretch out" the words.
3. Model first for your child, then have him/her try it.
  - Cat= /c/ /aaaaa/ /t/ Pull the slinky as you stretch out each sound.

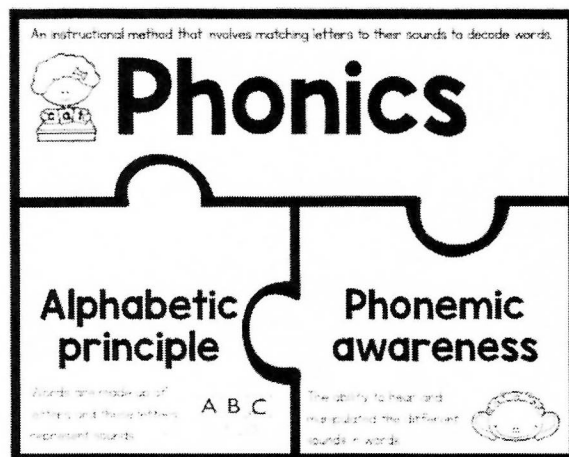


## Words to use:

duck, bear, soap, soup, bat, leaf, shed, bell, moon, pin, rope, chip, ball, boot, pan, log, leg, cone, fan, seed, pan, bone, man, book, cat, rake, road, lip, mat, meat, lake, phone, pig, rag, sip, seat, chair, cup, rock, boat, feet, rain, cub, sock, coat, mouse, tape, goal, pail, tag, pen, pot, pit, watch, math, fish

# What is Phonics?


- Phonics is a method for teaching reading.
- Phonics helps kids learn the relationships between the letters of written language and the sounds of spoken language.
- When students know their letters and sounds and have developed phonemic awareness, they are ready for phonics instruction.



# Why is it important?

Phonics helps your child learn to read and spell. Our written language is much like a code and phonics is how we break that code. Research shows that phonics is essential to beginning reading instruction. In 2000, the National Reading Panel reviewed thousands of studies and concluded that early instruction in phonics is the best way to teach children how to read.

## Tips:

- Find out what phonics skills your child is learning. Reinforce these skills at home with spelling and reading practice. How?
  1. Use a white board or pencil and paper to give your child opportunities to write words with that spelling pattern or rule.
    - Say a word using the new phonics skill. For example, if your child is learning short a, say three letter words with short a: *can, pat, jam, rag*, etc.
    - Have your child repeat the word, then stretch it out to hear each of the sounds in the word: "rrrrraaaaaag"
    - Segment the sounds: "/r/ /a/ /g/." To make this multisensory, tap a finger for each sound. 
    - Segment again, this time pausing to write the letter(s) that goes with each sound.
  2. Say a word and have your child build the words using letter tiles.
  3. Read real and nonsense words with the focus phonics element in isolation and in context.
    - See ideas on the next page.
  4. Practice spelling the phonetic words.
    - Spelling words phonetically helps beginning readers solidify the mental representation of a word. This means that *sounding out* phonetic words *to spell*, along with sounding out words *to read* both contribute to eventually being able to read words *by sight*. See next page for more details.

# Phonics Activities

## Building Words

Letter Tiles



Magnetic Letters

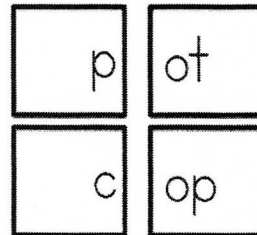


Print letter tiles here:

<http://bit.ly/buildwordtiles>

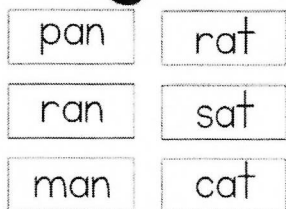
- Call out words with the phonetic element you are working on.
- Have your child build the word using magnetic letters or letter tiles.
- Variation: After your child builds a word, change the word by just one letter. For example, if you've already made 'ham', say, "Change one letter to make the word 'ram'. Now change one letter to make the word 'rag'." Continue this to give your child practice with phoneme manipulation. Then go back to building new words.

## Mix and Match



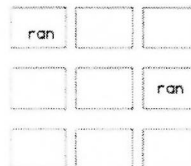
Cut note cards in half. Write word endings on one side and word beginnings on the other side. Mix and match to make some real and some nonsense words.

## Sorting Words



Write words with the phonetic element on note cards. Have your child read and sort them into common groups. For example, your child may sort by word family, as shown above. You may also sort by vowel sound or by initial letters.

## Memory



Choose 6-8 words with the phonetic element you are focusing on. For example, if you were working on short 'a', you would most choose ran, pan, rat, rag, fan, bat, am, etc. Write each word on two different note cards. Place all cards face down. On turn, choose two cards. Read both cards. If they are a match, keep them. If not, turn them back over. Winner is the player with the most matches at the end. Note: It is important that your child reads every card that is turned over so they are getting that practice.

## Writing Words



It is important for kids to be writing words in addition to reading them. For phonetic words, kids should get practice with segmenting the sounds in a word, then translating those sounds to letters. This will help kids begin to distinguish between similar words, such as big, dog, dig, bag. Simply looking at the word, trying to memorize and then copy it does not have the same long-term benefits. For this reason, it is helpful to have your child write and spell both real and nonsense words. Once your child is proficient with single words, begin spelling simple phonetic sentences, such as Pam can jog.

## Phonetic Stories



Primary Phonics Storybooks



Now I'm Reading



Bob Books

TIPS:

- Read each book more than once for fluency.
- Ask questions to encourage reading for meaning, not just decoding.

You can find these on Amazon and at most book stores. Remember, these stories are for beginning readers to help solidify phonics skills for future reading success. They are not the most interesting books, but they are a means to an end. Once kids can fluently decode, they will be ready for and more confident with the next level of more interesting books.

For a list of phonetic words, use the link OR the QR code :

<http://bit.ly/phoneticwordlists>





# What are Sight Words

A **sight word** is any word that is recognized automatically rather than sounded out. Sight words can help a child build fluency in reading. Sight words are high frequency words- words most frequently occurring in reading materials. Memorizing these words will help your child with fluent reading.

Some of these words can be sounded out, but many are not decodable. Repetition is the key to mastering those sight words. **Practicing sight words** at home can make a huge difference. You can make this an enjoyable experience through games and hands-on activities. The key is repetition. Your child needs to see and recognize the word alone and in context multiple times.

## When Should They be Taught?

When to start working with sight words is different for every child. Your child may be ready to learn sight words if he/she:

- Can identify all letters of the alphabet (both upper case and lower case)
- Knows the sounds associated with the letters
- Shows interest in reading or writing
- Begins asking questions about words or spelling

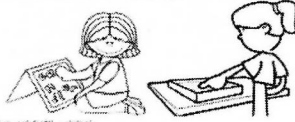
## What Not to Do

Learning sight words is an important step for beginning readers, but often children may be pushed to start too soon, resulting in negative attitudes about reading, viewing reading as “word calling,” and/or developing some bad reading habits such as guessing. Here are some tips that may help.

- Make sure your child knows their letters and sounds first.
- Begin teaching the skill of decoding first.
- Do not teach too many at once. If your child confuses words already, do not keep introducing more.
- If sight words can be decoded (*that, in, went, etc*) it is still okay to sound these words out. The more they sound them out, the more likely your child will start to recognize the word on sight *correctly*.
- Encourage your child to notice all parts of the word. Point out parts that are decodable and parts that are not. We want your child to see the structure of the word, to avoid confusion with similar looking sight words.
- Practice them in and out of context. Put a new sight word in a simple sentence. Encourage your child to use visual cues (letters in the word) as well as context (what would make sense) to figure out the word.



# Hands-On

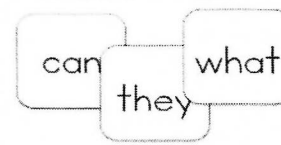


Have your child make the words using:

- Play dough
- Shaving cream
- Sand
- Magnets letters on a white sheet
- Alphabet blocks
- Letter tiles (letters written on small note cards)

Show your child a word using the flashcards. Say the word. Take away the flashcard and have your child make the word. Repeat again and repeat. See it, say it, make it with it. Repeat for a variety of words with increasing difficulty.

# Flashcards



Make flashcards using note cards. Spend about 2-3 minutes on the flashcards. Start with the words that your child knows. Add one new word at a time. As you add more new words, it is important to review the old words so your child will be able to recognize the words quickly. If your child does not remember a word, tell him/her the word. Point out visual cues. Have your child repeat after you.

# Play Memory



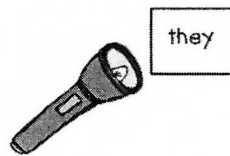
1. Write 8-16 sight words on note cards (choose familiar and new words).
  2. Make a second set with the same words.
  3. Lay out cards, face down.
  4. On turn, flip over two cards. Read the sight word. If they match, player gets to keep them. If not, flip them back over.
- Give your child a moment to try to read the words. If they do not know it, tell them the word. Make sure they repeat the word and look at the card.

# Go Fish



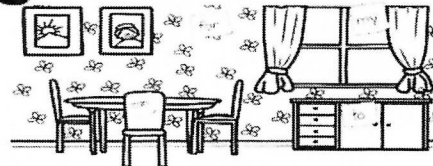
1. Make a duplicate set of sight words.
2. Play Go Fish.
  - "Do you have the word *also*?"
  - "Go Fish" or "Yes" (player hands over card).
  - The person with the most matches wins.
  - If your child does not know the words, you could play with the cards face up. At that point, it's more of a matching game, but it's still fun for them! 😊

# Flashlight Game



1. Turn off lights.
2. Tape words on the wall or ceiling.
3. Use the flashlight to shine on the word then read.

# Sight Word Hunt



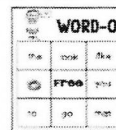
Write sight words on sticky notes. Stick the words all around a room. Have your child search for the words. When one is found, say the word and spell it aloud. If the word is read correctly, they get to keep it. If not, you tell them the name and sound then "hide" it again. Have a mixture of new and known sight words.

# Word Search



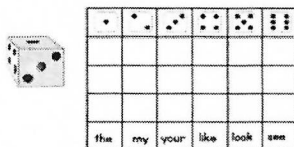
Choose one word to focus on. Write this word several times mixed in with other sight words that your child knows. Have your child search for the focus word. Each time the word is found, your child will circle and read the word.

# Word-O & Tic-Tac-Toe



1. Fill in a word with the words.
2. Call out the words and mark the spaces. You could just call out words randomly or you could also call up sight words and pull one at a time out of a bag. Take turns being the "caller".
3. The first one with a word covered calls out the word "WORD-O".
1. Write words in the tic-tac-toe spaces.
2. Take turns selecting a space to read.
3. If read correctly, an X or O is placed on the space until someone wins.
4. Winner: Three in a row diagonally, across, or vertically.
5. Variation: Each person picks one sight word. When you choose where you want to go, write your word instead of an X or O.

# Sight Word Race



1. Download this chart here: <http://bit.ly/rolllightword>
2. Write one sight word at the bottom of each column.
3. Roll the cube. Read the word that is under the column with that number.
4. Write the word in the next available space.
5. The word that fills the boxes first is the winner.

# Sight Word Spin



1. Download this game here <http://bit.ly/sightspin> (editable and printable versions) and follow the instructions for creating this game.
2. Spin the paperclip spinner.
3. Read the words under the animal that the spinner lands on.
4. Color a ☺ every time a whole column is read.
5. Spin until all smiles are colored.

# What are Reading Strategies?

Reading strategies are things your child can do when stuck on a word. Attempting to decode a word is a great strategy, but if that doesn't work, we want kids to have other tools to figure out the word. When you are reading with your child at home, encourage use of these strategies when stuck on a word. If attempts to use strategies are made, but your child still cannot figure out the word, then give the correct word. Always have your child reread the *whole* sentence. The goal of reading is to **make meaning** of the text.

## Prompts to guide your child when they are stuck:

Use the strategies on the following page as a guide. Some simple prompts you could also use are:

- What would make sense?
- What is the first sound in this word?
- Is there a smaller chunk that you recognize?
- Let's cover the ending (for words with suffixes like -ed, -ing, -es, -er, etc.)
- Try reading that sentence again. The word may pop in your head.
- Does the picture help at all?

## What to do if your child reads a word incorrectly:

When a word is read incorrectly, wait for your child to finish the sentence.

- Give them a chance to catch their own mistake.
- If they do not catch it on their own, then you can step in.
- Here are some things you could say without just giving the answer:



1. *Did that sound right?*



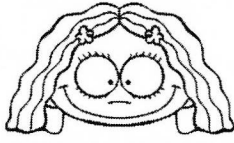
2. *Did that make sense?*



3. *Does that word look right? Or Does that match up?*

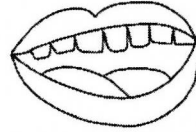
- If your child has hit the frustration level, take a break and read to your child for a while. At this point, you could model using these strategies. You might say, "What do you think I could do to figure this word out?" You are still the one doing the reading, but you are encouraging your child to utilize the strategies.

## Look at the Picture



We use this strategy for beginning readers. We teach students to use this strategy *with* other strategies. We don't want them to rely too heavily on pictures, but in the beginning stages, it is very helpful.

## Get Your Mouth Ready



Sometimes, just making the first sound in the word helps you think about what the word could be. Use this with "Think about what makes sense," "look at the picture," and/or "skip and go back".

## Sound it Out



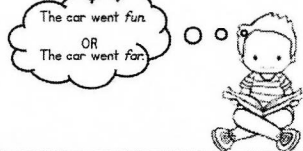
This strategy is simply using phonics skills to sound out a word. Students need to be proficient with letter/sound correspondence, especially vowel sounds, to use this strategy.

## Look for Chunks



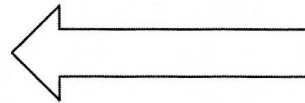
Cover part of the word to split the word into chunks. This example would be sl-ip. It's also good to chunk words with endings, such as -ing, -ed, etc. Chunking is especially important later with multi-syllable words.

## Think: What would make sense?



It's always important to think about what makes sense. This strategy works on it's own. It also couples with "Go back and reread" AND "Skip the word". Think about what word would make sense to fill in the blank. This is not a random guess- use visual cues as well.

## Go back and reread



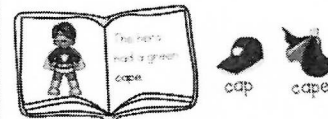
Sometimes it helps to start the sentence over again. Go slower, paying careful attention to the words. If a child is stuck on a word where there is sufficient context, I often have them start the sentence again to gain some "momentum."

## Skip the word



Use this strategy when your child is unable to sound out a word. This strategy **MUST** be used with the strategy, "Go back and reread." Ex: The car drove through the tunnel." Skip *through*, go back and think about what would make sense.

## Try a Different Sound



A child may sound out the word, *find*, with the *i* being a short *i* instead of a long *i*. Also, many multi-syllable words have vowels that are long. Teach your child to try both vowel sounds if they get stuck.

# Comprehension

**Comprehension** is understanding what is read. Many children are excellent decoders, but they may not be comprehending what they are reading. Other readers may be so focused on decoding, they do not pay attention to what is being read. Good readers interact with the text as they read. True comprehension goes beyond basic understanding of a story. Children must think deeply about a text, analyzing, interpreting, and evaluating what is being read. Reading aloud to your child provides a great opportunity to practice comprehension.

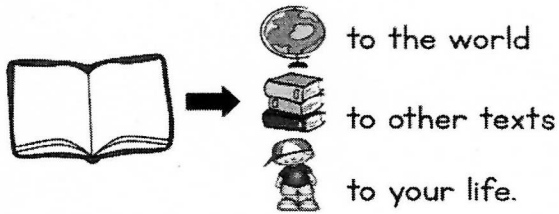
## How you can help:

- Read books in **shorter sections** and pause to check for understanding.
  - Every child is different. Some kids can read whole paragraphs or pages and can remember what they read. Other kids need to pause more frequently to check for understanding. Experiment to find out what frequency is best for your child.
- Encourage your child to go back and **reread** when there is confusion. "I'm not sure what happened here," or "I'm not sure what this means. I'm going to go back and figure it out."
- Discuss **words** that your child may not know. Give examples of how to use the word.
- Model **your own thinking**: We all have thoughts as we read, we just might not be aware of it. Make a point to say these thoughts out loud. Examples include, "I wonder why..." "I wonder how" "That's silly," "Why do you think the character did/said that?"
- Help your child make connections to what is being read. You may say, "This reminds me of when..." or "This is just like..."
- Ask questions before, during, and after reading. Make sure the questions do not just have a "yes" or "no" answer. For example, after stopping to discuss a character's action, you may ask, "Why do you think he did that? How will that make the other character feel? What might happen because of that?"
- Encourage your child to make predictions before reading and then continue to make new predictions as you read.
- Before reading:
  - Look at the title, cover, and pictures.
  - Make predictions.
  - For nonfiction: Think about what you already know about the topic.
- During reading:
  - Check for understanding
  - Discuss new vocabulary
  - Ask questions
  - Make connections
  - Model your thoughts and questions.
- After reading
  - Summarize the story or discuss big ideas of a nonfiction text.

# Comprehension Strategies

To help students develop comprehension skills, they are taught a variety of strategies. These strategies help students read for purpose and meaning. The more a child interacts with a text using these strategies, the deeper their comprehension will be. Below are a few of the comprehension strategies that your child will be learning in school.

## Connect



What does this text remind you of?

## Predict



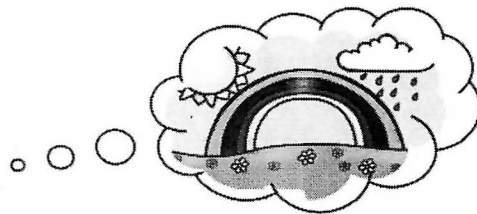
Think about what might happen next.

## Ask Questions



Ask WHO, WHAT, WHEN, WHERE, WHY as you read.

## Visualize



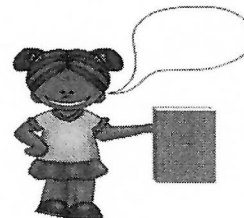
Make a picture in your mind.

## Clarify



Look closer when something is confusing.

## Summarize



Retell the most important events.